



Animal &  
Plant Health  
Agency

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## **Information Note**

**Spring 2020: Increase in tick numbers and tick-borne diseases reported, particularly in sheep**

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There have been several cases of tick borne diseases reported during the early months of 2020 likely due to the relatively mild winter weather. Some farms have reported heavy losses of lambs. A case of tick borne fever was recorded in sheep in North Wales as early as the end of January. In April, 23 young lambs died after showing malaise and anaemia that were infested with large numbers of ticks in a flock and had tick pyaemia in the South East of England.

## Common ticks

*Ixodes ricinus*, the sheep, deer or castor bean tick is the most common tick associated with outbreaks of clinical disease in UK. This tick is found mainly in areas of rough grazing, moorland, woodland and areas where wild deer and rabbit are in abundance.

However it has been notable this year that there have been reports of severe infestations, disease and deaths in sheep grazing the South Downs associated with the less common red sheep tick, *Haemaphysalis punctata*, which is predominantly an ectoparasite of livestock, however severe infestations on horses and human biting incidents have also been reported. This tick inhabits grasslands including downland and coastal marshland rather than the rough grazing that *I. ricinus* requires. It has appeared to have expanded its range in southern England in recent years.

## Tick prevention treatments for sheep - always check up-to-date data sheets

<https://www.noahcompendium.co.uk/>

Chemical	Applications	Use	Persistence	Comments
Organophosphate Diazinon	Plunge dip	Treat ticks	Will depend on: The species of tick and its feeding habits. The level of challenge. Location of sheep post-dipping.	Operator safety, dip licensing and disposal. Mobile dippers may be an alternative. Interaction with Levamisole.
Synthetic pyrethroids (various-deltamethrin, cypermethrin, cypermethrin alpha)	Topical (spot or pour-on)	Treatment and control of ticks	Varies from not recorded to normally 12 weeks	Some not for use in lambs less than 1 week. Some have specific measures for lambs less than 10kg.

# Resistance

There have not been confirmed reports of resistance to acaricides in the UK, but there have been reports in reduction in persistency of products when animals are faced with large numbers of ticks.

## Useful links & further information

APHA Focus Article on Tickborne diseases of sheep in the Veterinary Record

<http://veterinaryrecord.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/vr.m1352?ijkey=zfA3mHnyqYvLA&keytype=ref&siteid=bmjournals>

Medlock, J.M., Hansford, K.M., Vaux, A.G.C., Cull, B., Pietzsch, M.E., Gillingham, E.L., Johnson, N. and Phipps, L.P. (2018), Has the red sheep tick, *Haemaphysalis punctata*, recently expanded its range in England?. *Med Vet Entomol*, 32: 473-480.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/mve.12335>

Phipps, L. P., Hernández-Triana, L. M., Goharriz, H., Welchman, D., & Johnson, N. (2016). Detection of *Theileria luwenshuni* in sheep from Great Britain. *Parasites & vectors*, 9, 203.

<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13071-016-1486-5>



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